

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
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R 151011Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1153
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8181

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CB, LA, TH, VN
SUBJECT: THAI RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES OF INDOCHINA

REF: (A) BANGKOK 7855 (B) VIENTIANE 722

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT COMMENTS ON THE RECENT
RESISTANCE SIZURE AND LAO RETAKING OF TWO MEKONG RIVER ISLANDS.
HE EXPRESSED HOE THAT DISCUSSIONS WILL TAKE PLACE WITH LAO
AND VIETNAMESE DELEGATIONS PARTICIPATING IN ESCAP COUNCIL
MEETING NEXT WEEK AND REAFFIRMED THAI ADHERENCE TO COMMUNIQUE
SIGNED IN HANOI LAST AUG 6. ANOTHER OFFICIAL SPECULATED THAT
ISLANDS' PROBLEM HAS SET BACK ATTEMPTS TO CONCLUDE AVIATION
AGREEMENT WITH LAOS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT PACHARIYANGKUN HAS SPOKEN TO
THE PRESS SEVERAL TIMES IN RECENT DAYS, PRIMARILY CONCERNING
THAI RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA. KEY POINTS HE HAS MADE FOLLOW.
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2. MEKONG RIVER ISLANDS. LPDR NOTIFICATION TO THAILAND
IN APR 9 NOTE THAT LAOS PLANNED TO RETAKE TWO RESISTANCE-
HELD ISLANDS IN MEKONG RIVER WAS "WELCOME ATTITUDE". RTG
REPLY (PRESUMABLY THAT CONVEYED APR 11, REF A) STATED THAT
THAILAND HAD NO INTENTION OF INTERFERING IN, OR ANYTHING
TO DO WITH, ISLAND AFFAIR, WHICH IS LAO INTERNAL MATTER,

ASKING ONLY THAT LPDR BE CAREFUL IN TAKING ANY ACTIONS SO THAT THERE IS NO DAMAGE TO THAI SAIDE. "NOTHING MUST BE ALLOWED TO AFFECT ADVERSELY THE CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES." WITH SEIZURES OF DON CHING CHU, UPPADIT CALLED OUTCOME "MOST SATISFACTORY". ASKED ABOUT REPORT FROM VIENTIANE THAT RESISTANCE FIGHTERS HAD BEEN TRAINED IN NONG KHAI (REF B), HE TERMED IT "A ONE-SIDED ALLEGATION".

3. RELATIONS WITH LAOS. MINISTER SAID THERE HAS BEEN AN IMPROVEMENT SINCE THAILAND RETURNED SEVERAL AIRCRAFT TO LAOS AND SAID HIS COUNTRY IS PREPARED TO RETURN EIGHT ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT. OTHER INDICATIONS OF GOOD RELATIONSHIP ARE AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN THAI AND LAO ON AIR FLIGHTS WHICH THAI COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER WILL SOON SIGN, LAO RELEASE OF THAI NATIONALS, AND RESULTS OF DISCUSSIONS MFA UNDERSECRETARY WONG PHONNIKON HELD IN VIENTIANE IN FEBRUARY. LAOS HAS NO AMBASSADOR IN BANGKOK BECAUSE "IT CLAIMED THAT IT CANNOT YET FIND A SUITABLE PERSON. AS A CONSEQUENCE WE ALSO HAVE NOT ASSIGNED AN AMBASSADOR TO VIENTIANE." UPPADIT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT LAO AND THAI COULD MEET TOGETHER DURING NEXT WEEK'S ESCAP COUNCIL MEETING IN BANGKOK.

4. RELATIONS WITH VIET-NAM. SIMILARLY, THE RTG IS LOOKING FORWARD TO HOLDING TALKS WITH VIETNAMESE DURING ESCAP MEETING. UPPADIT REAFFIRMED RTG'S ADHERENCE TO AUG 6, 1976, THAI-VIETNAMESE JOINT COMMUNIQUE, TO PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERFERENCE IN ONE ANOTHER'S AFFAIRS, AND TO POLICY CONFIDENTIAL

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OF FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL COUNTRIES, REGARDLESS OF THEIR POLITICAL SYSTEM. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS EXIST BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, ONLY AMBASSADORS HAVE NOT BEEN EXCHANGED "DUE TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION."

5. CAMBODIAN ATTACK ON BAN LAEM VILLAGE. RTG WILL PROTEST KC APR 10 ATTACK, ALTHOUGH "IT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY" TO PUBLISH ANOTHER WHITE PAPER, THIS ACTION RESERVED ONLY FOR "SERIOUS" CASES.

6. COMMENT. IN HIS PRESS STATEMENTS THIS WEEK, UPPADIT MAINTAINED HIS CHARACTERISTICALLY UPBEAT STANCE, REPEATING THAI DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. HE (AND OTHER RTG OFFICIALS) AVOIDED POLEMICS IN RESPONSE TO THE FLOW OF ACCUSATIONS OUT OF VIENTIANE AND HANOI DURING THE PAST WEEK. WE CONTINUE TO WONDER HOW ACTION OF RESISTANCE IN TAKING OVER TWO MEKONG RIVER ISLANDS WILL AFFECT FINAL SIGNING OF AVIATION AGREEMENT WITH LAOS. ALTHOUGH UPPADIT IMPLIED THAT SIGNATURE WAS

IMMINENT, MIDDLE-LEVEL MFA OFFICIAL CONFIDED APR 15
THAT MINISTRY HAS DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT FINALIZING
OF AVIATION AGREEMENT HAS BEEN SIDETRACKED FOR THE TIME
BEING.

7. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO VERIFY HERE UPPADIT'S CLAIM THAT
THAILAND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH RESISTANCE TAKEOVER OF THE
TWO ISLANDS. EMBASSY NOTED WITH INTEREST LAO PRISONER'S
ASSERTION THAT THAI TROOPS WERE PRESENT ON DON CHING CHU
DURING REBEL OCCUPATION (REF B). AMERICAN JOURNALIST WHO
SPOKE WITH ONE OF THE RAGTAG REBEL TROOPS WHO FLED ISLAND
AFTER LAO RETOOK IT SAID THE SOLDIER STATED HE SAW NO
THAI TROOPS ON DON CHING CHU NOR, TO BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE,
WAS RTG EVEN INVOLVED WITH HIS REBEL ELEMENT. GOVERNOR
CHAMANAN POJANA OF NONG KHAI SAID APR 12 THAT TOTAL OF 12
REBELS FROM DON CHING CHU AND 180 FROM DON SANKHI CROSSED
INTO THAILAND FOLLOWING LAO ACTION, WERE DISARMED, AND
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SENT TO REFUGEE CAMP FOR INTERROGATION.

8. FINALLY, IT SEEMS TO US THAT REBEL HOLD OVER THE TWO
ISLANDS EARLY THIS WEEK COULD HAVE PRODUCED MORE SERIOUS
CONFLICT BETWEEN THAILAND AND LAOS THAN EITHER SIDE PER-
MITTED OT HAPPEN. PLACING THAT MINOR ISSUE INTO PER-
SPECTIVE WAS THE OBSERVATION OF THE REPORTER CITED ABOVE
WHO, TRAVELLING BY LAND FROM DON CHING CHU TO UBON,
REMARKED ON HOW QUIET AND NORMAL THE SITUATION APPEARED
TO BE OTHERWISE ALONG THAT LENGTHY PORTION OF THE BORDER.
THE MUKDAHAN-SAVANNAKHET CROSSING POINT WAS OPEN AND
ACTIVE AND, ELSEWHERE, SMUGGLING WAS OCCURRING WITH
EASE.
WHITEHOUSE

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